

# Psychological Tools - Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) developed by Paul Gilbert

At the heart of Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT) is an evolutionary model of human motivational systems to understand human thought, emotion, motivation, and behavior.

The model proposes human beings have a tripartite motivational system (which is sometimes referred to as an emotional regulation system) with different systems which can be conceptualized as 'mindsets'.

- People can be in states of 'threat' - with a mindset focused on seeking protection from dangers
- 'drive' - with a mindset attuned towards wanting, seeking, aspiring or striving
- 'soothing' - with a mindset attended to giving and receiving care, affecting, and nurturance

The model below is based on the idea that we switch between three systems to manage our emotions. Each system is associated with different brain regions and different brain chemistry.

Stress and distress are caused by imbalance between the systems, often associated with under-development of the soothing system. If one system dominates the others, this can have negative consequences:

- If threat dominates, we can often feel 'on guard', 'under threat' or anxious
- If we spend most of our time in drive, then when something stops us from achieving (e.g. persistent symptoms) we often become distressed and self-critical - this can then push us into threat mode
- If we spent all of our time in soothe, we would never get anything done!

